Thank you, Chairman Udall and Ranking Member Feeney, for providing the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, NASA's largest Union, this opportunity to present our perspective on the workforce challenges facing NASA today. It is a privilege and honor for me to speak for IFPTE and for the thousands of NASA employees we represent.

IFPTE's primary interest in testifying today is to provide advocacy for maintaining the technical excellence and independence of NASA's civil service workforce that has served the Agency so well for decades. However, our interest extends more broadly to a deep commitment to NASA's success not only in the near term but, more importantly, in the long term, consistent with the true spirit of the Vision for Space Exploration (VSE). NASA's rank-and-file employees are not only the heart and soul of the agency, but also provide much of its brain power. They are hard working and dedicated to mission success, but see this success as including all of NASA's critical missions. Indeed, many of our nation's best and brightest came to NASA primarily to be part of endeavors greater and nobler than more lucrative pursuits available to them in the private sector. They came to discover and to explore so that America can lead mankind in aerospace science, engineering, and exploration. That dream is in jeopardy today, not because of a failure of technical competence or innovation, but because of a failure of political will.

NASA is not facing a workforce crisis; it is facing a fiscal crisis. The President's Vision outlines a bold and ambitious set of milestones for NASA, ultimately leading to permanent human presence on the moon and a safe manned mission to Mars. Yet unfortunately, the White House has thus far been unwilling to propose a bold and ambitious NASA budget to match. The misguided policy decision to make the VSE an unfunded mandate is the driving force behind all of NASA's current woes. IFPTE calls on Congress to redirect this policy and to fund NASA at the levels Authorized less than two years ago with overwhelming bipartisan support. This course of action is essential for enabling NASA's success, for maintaining America's prestige and leadership in aerospace R&D, and ultimately for safeguarding our national security.

- Unless NASA's budget is increased significantly, commensurate with its full set of responsibilities, mission failure is a real possibility. Something has to give. Either the Constellation schedule will need to be significantly slipped, or Shuttle and Space Station activities will need to be curtailed even further, or, as the Administration would now have it, critical Aeronautics, Science and Technology activities will be severely cut, leaving Orion and Ares vehicles with ill-defined missions and NASA's Science and Aeronautics responsibilities unfulfilled. This is not a partisan concern; for example, Representative Calvert, the former Chairman of this subcommittee, recently expressed concern about how cuts in NASA Aeronautics R&D impact the nation's effort, coordinated by the newly established inter-agency Joint Program Development Office (JPDO), to develop the next generation airspace system:

  "… Congress anticipated that the Federal Aviation Administration, as the operator of our nation's ATM system, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, as our nation's leading aeronautics R&D organization, would continue to work collaboratively as they have for more than forty years: NASA researching and developing long-lead, high risk technologies; FAA adapting their research products to incorporate them into

the national airspace system.… The JPDO recognized NASA's expertise early on by selecting them to lead the 'Agile Airspace' integrated product team…. In the last eighteen months, however, and subsequent to the creation of the JPDO, NASA's aeronautics R&D program has undergone a major reorganization… I remain concerned that so early in this grand endeavor now known as NextGen, one of the two key partners is changing the rules of the game, and it's happening at a time when R&D roadmaps are being finalized, and spending for developing and integrating new technologies is about to ramp up. I would strongly prefer that NASA's Airspace Management program continue to advance promising technologies to a high level… It is my sincere hope that NASA's actions don't hinder JPDO's efforts to develop technologies upon which NextGen is reliant."

IFPTE shares this concern and urges Congress to properly fund NASA's Aeronautics R&D mission, which will not only address this and other critical national needs, but will also greatly reduce the workforce instability at the Agency.

- The Administration's fiscal policy is driving the indefinite postponement of the recruitment of NASA's next generation of scientists and engineers thereby seriously compromising the long-term health of the Agency. At an All-Hands meeting at Ames Research Center on February 22nd 2007, Administrator Griffin responded to a query about what NASA is doing to recruit young scientists and engineers by saying:

  "I cannot grow the Agency by bringing in even all-stars right now that I want to bring in, unless and until folks like us who, as you said, are getting older, until and unless these folks retire."

  While we sympathize with the Administrator, given the untenable position he is in of trying to meet NASA's many awesome responsibilities without an honest budget, we must stand in opposition to any further stalling. This defeatist statement, coming directly from the Administrator, reveals that the current workforce plan is simply to punt, effectively sacrificing NASA's future to meet its immediate milestones, leaving his successor to deal with an even more serious problem down the road.

IFPTE applauds the National Research Council (NRC) for its thoughtful report and recommendations on NASA's workforce planning. The report properly recognizes the symbiotic relationship between NASA's in-house scientists and their academic colleagues, as well as the immediate need to engage aggressively in the education, hands-on training, and recruitment of the next generation of NASA employees. We fully endorse their key recommendations.

- Although the NRC primary interest is in maintaining NASA's support of academic research and IFPTE does not agree with all of the statements made in the report, nonetheless, IFPTE believes that NASA's entire multi-sector workforce would be well served by following their recommendations.

- One concern however is the references made about government conflict-of-interest rules hindering the recruitment of senior program/project managers from industry. IFPTE strongly believes that these ethics rules are absolutely essential for protecting the government and the taxpayer from the corrupting influence of private profit motives. The influence of the aerospace industry on NASA policies

is powerful enough already, any weakening of government ethics rules would be unwise.

IFPTE is however disappointed with the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) report and strongly objects to the fact that it blindly accepts the Administration's assertions about NASA's fiscal and programmatic constraints and uses them to bolster their argument that some dramatic workforce realignment with a significant reduction of civil service component is somehow required for the success of the VSE. This simply is not the case and indeed, we believe the converse is true. We also strongly object to their recommendations that NASA management be given new authority for streamlined Reductions-In-Force (RIFs) and for termination based on retirement eligibility.

- For example, the NAPA report (p. 164) makes the astounding statement that:

  "*Most employees who have been "uncovered" in the past are concentrated in various legacy programs and related occupations, such as engineering and science support (technicians); …. program/project management; computer science and information technology; space sciences; … various systems engineering competencies; electrical and electronics systems; …. The April 2006 NASA Workforce Strategy recognized this reality."*

  The above statement that NASA does not now need and is not going to need these "legacy" competencies to meet its future missions in Science, Aeronautics, and Human Spaceflight is absurd. Yet, assertions like this are used throughout the report to justify a persistent call to target CS employees for layoffs. Indeed, the NRC report correctly points that NASA desperately needs to recruit more talent in the areas of program/project management and in systems engineering (and talented Aeronautics program/project managers and systems engineers can clearly be quickly cross-trained to support spaceflight programs). Furthermore, the NAPA report's lack of objectivity is revealed as it repeatedly uses the term "reality" to describe unchallenged assertions by NASA management, while they refer to Union statements as "views".

- The fatal flaw in the NAPA report is that most of its recommendations are based on mistaken or uncertain premises presented as facts. The budgetary and the programmatic assertions made are not the clear cut "reality" that NAPA would have one believe; for example, the drastic and unwise cuts to Science, Aeronautics, and Technology Development in the President's proposed FY2008 budget will not become reality unless Congress agrees to them. Over the last few years, a bipartisan coalition in Congress has repeatedly shown its willingness to restore NASA funding in these areas.

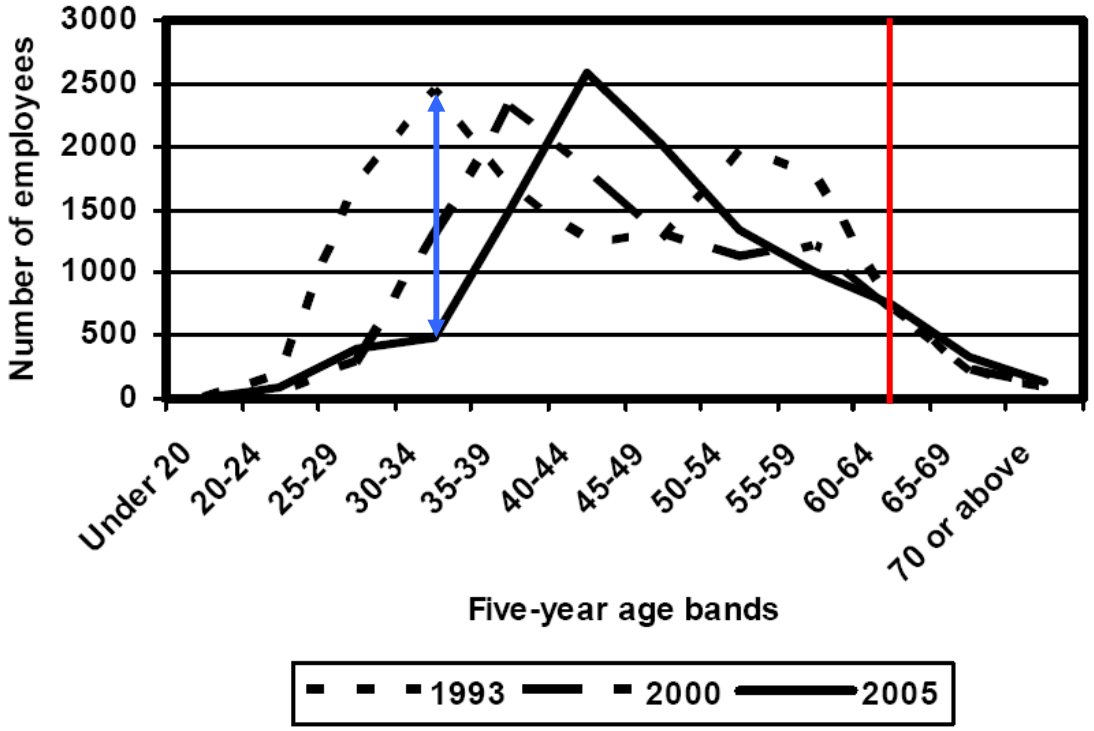
IFPTE continues to support the "ten healthy Centers" philosophy put forward by Dr. Griffin; we reject criticism of his plan within the NAPA report. Unfortunately, the implementation has been spotty. In particular, as noted in the NAPA report (p. 57), current policies have severely stressed NASA's research centers. The solution to this problem cannot be to convert them into mini-operational centers or to subject them to a BRAC-like process. Rather, the Administration must recognize that revitalized R&D at NASA's research centers is crucial for the success of the VSE and NASA's Science and Aeronautics missions. NASA's research centers and their academic partners must be

provided with the resources needed for them to continue to make their contributions to NASA's longer-term missions.

- Specifically, healthy Aeronautics and Exploration research budgets should be fully sequestered from the manned spaceflight operational and exploration development budgets and should be managed by the research centers. This is necessary to prevent continued pilfering of longer-term research projects in support of shorter-term Constellation milestones, and to make sure that the technologies needed to support productive and safe long-duration lunar missions are available when the rockets are ready to get us there. In particular, the Advanced Capabilities programs should be managed by research centers with their R&D activities primarily at the research centers. This will protect these vital efforts from being usurped by Constellation and will foster innovation, unfettered by the constraints of current operational thinking. Constellation must be kept healthy by direct funding, not by co-opting R&D funds.

- As recommended in the NRC report (recommendation 6), small scale flight projects (e.g., small sats, free flyers, balloon launches) should be revitalized thereby enhancing synergistic links between academia, the smaller emerging "new" space industry, and the research centers. This not only has the potential to produce good space, earth, life and microgravity science for less money, but will also provide the key hands-on experience needed to develop strong in-house program/project managers/scientists and to educate/recruit the next generation of employees.

<u>NASA's aging workforce:</u>



The key problem and the misguided nature of the current management approach are readily apparent in Fig. 2-2 of the NRC report (see above).

- The real problem is the nearly five-fold reduction in the number in the 30-34 year old range between 1993 and 2005 (see vertical blue arrow). The last two Administrations share the blame for dereliction of their duty to renew and replenish this critical national capability.

- NASA management (and the NAPA report) is obsessed with the faux problem of the right-hand tail of the distribution (to the right of the vertical red line), which represents only about 5% of the workforce and has demonstrated itself to be stable for more than the last decade. Furthermore, this tail represents the older, experienced and dedicated, scientific and engineering workforce, whose retention is often critical for mission success because of the priceless corporate memory they possess.

Matrix management and full-cost recovery of civil-service salaries:

NASA's peculiar version of matrix management, in which programs wield all budgetary power and line management is effectively impotent, is harming morale and productivity at most centers among both the rank-and-file and line managers.

- When NASA claimed to convert over to "full-cost accounting" in FY04, it actually converted over to a full-cost recovery system. This system unwisely empowered distant program managers to siphon salary and facilities money away from field centers. By giving so much power to senior program managers (for Constellation, program management is often indistinguishable or closely aligned with line management at Johnson Space Center), a low priority has been placed on preserving long-term institutional assets and capabilities at the less-powerful centers. Labor costs at these centers can thus be low-balled by pitting competing centers against each other and they have ended up being forced to provide technical support to programs at below actual cost simply because a half FTE for full time work is better than nothing. This has created the artificially inflated "uncovered capacity" that is being exaggerated by anti-CS proponents to justify layoffs.

- The Administration has only recently begun to pay adequate attention to the agency-wide consequences of full-cost recovery on core technical competencies and facilities. There is little incentive within program management (which controls nearly all of NASA funds and is under terrible pressure to meet current fiscal-year milestones) to be interested in any long-term agency-wide workforce planning.

- Matrix management coupled with full-cost recovery is seriously undermining line/center management authority and morale. For matrix management to work properly, line and program management must have equal, complementary authorities. Line managers should control CS labor and travel costs (provided directly to each center); while program managers should control procurement and contractor labor costs. This more equitable balance would then force greater cooperation between line and program management to the benefit of the Agency, its programs, and all of its employees.

Abuse of term hiring:

NASA management has been systematically abusing its authority to create term civil-servant positions with strict quotas on hiring permanent positions, thus forcing centers to make improper term hires to fill long-term technical needs more properly served by a permanent hire.

- The percentage of NASA's civil service workforce that is employed under a term contract has increased more than 7-fold since the beginning of FY2003. Of the current term positions, 80% are scientists or engineers and many of them will leave the Agency in 2 to 6 years, despite NASA's considerable investment in training them.

- The number of outside hires into permanent science and engineering positions decreased more than 9-fold between FY2000 and FY2006.

- The ratio of permanent to non-permanent outside hires shifted from 1.3 in FY2000 to 0.4 in FY2006.

- As noted in the NAPA report (p. 160), "NASA has used term employment as a vehicle to extend the typical one-year probationary period." Even if this is meant to be benevolent, this common rationale for using a term hire instead of a permanent hire improperly circumvents the intent of Title 5 and the Flexibility Act.

- IFPTE agrees with the NAPA recommendation that the decision to offer term or permanent status should be based on a careful analysis of the job requirements and of the long-term need for the relevant skills. NASA must develop transparent, consistent, and compelling criteria for denying full civil-service rights to any new hire. However, IFPTE is troubled by the conclusion of Chapter VI of the NAPA report that asserts that

  "*Term employment may be preferable to permanent employment options given the great deal of budget and programmatic uncertainty*."

  This statement openly advocates for the improper use of term positions to compensate for political instability at the Agency. Every year, NASA's budget and programs are uncertain, so this cannot be used as a criterion for determining whether a position is best filled by a permanent or term hire. That decision should be based on the position's skill requirements and the long vs. short term need for the specific competency being hired.

- The exploding use of term positions is threatening the quality and independence of our technical staff. The best and brightest new scientist and engineering graduates are being wooed by MIT, Johns Hopkins, Carnegie Mellon, Stanford, Cal Tech, UC Berkeley and many other high-caliber academic institutions. Premier academic institutions offer tenure. In the past, NASA has been able to get its fair share of these candidates because it offered tenure, better benefits, and a similarly excellent intellectual environment. The NRC report (p. 41) notes that the reduction in federal pension benefits made under the Reagan Administration is hindering NASA's ability to recruit senior staff away from more lucrative private-sector positions with better benefits than the government. Any diminution of tenure rights will only make recruitment even more difficult as it will make cold cash the only useable currency to compete for top talent and the government is not in a good position to win based on that criterion. More critically, tenure provides technical

employees with the security they need to speak truth to power.

- A more extensive analysis of the crucial value of civil-service tenure can be found in IFPTE's testimony to this Subcommittee on June 13th, 2006.

Balancing the public and private workforce components:

IFPTE reiterates its prior testimony stating that NASA benefits greatly from the synergy generated by its combined federal and private-sector workforce. However, we also believe that NASA has achieved the minimum healthy balance between its current 18,020 civil servants on duty (16,299 full-time permanent) and its dedicated contractor workforce of around 40,000. The latest CS number represents a nearly a two-fold change from the 35,860 civil servants on board in FY1967, the last time NASA was working to send Americans to the moon and back safely. Any further decrease in the civil-service component would appear unwarranted and would put mission success at increased risk.

IFPTE is concerned that neither the NRC nor the NAPA report emphasized the many important reasons for maintaining a strong civil-service component to NASA's workforce especially when facing budgetary and schedule pressures. A few of these reasons are:

- Civil servants serve as smart buyers so the taxpayer buys good products at a fair price.

- Civil servants are needed to provide proper technical monitoring and financial oversight of NASA's contractor and academic efforts.

- Civil servants are needed to balance out private-sector profit motives in order to maintain safety. The Columbia Accident Investigations Board (p. 198) indeed pointed out that increases in the industry workforce together with reductions in the CS workforce contributed to the disaster and that, over time, NASA management tends to forget this.

  Prior to Challenger, Shuttle Program structure had hindered information flows, leading the Rogers Commission to conclude that critical information about technical problems was not conveyed effectively through the hierarchy. The Space Shuttle Program had altered its structure by outsourcing to contractors, which added to communication problems. The Commission recommended many changes to remedy these problems, and NASA made many of them. However, the Board found that those post-Challenger changes were undone over time by management actions. NASA administrators, reacting to government pressures, transferred more functions and responsibilities to the private sector. The change was cost-efficient, but personnel cuts reduced oversight of contractors at the same time that the agency's dependence upon contractor engineering judgment increased.

The Agency also needs to engage more scientists, engineers, and technicians, and fewer managers, deputy managers, associate managers, and assistant managers. NASA's dedicated technical workforce at all of its centers, both civil servant and contractor, stands ready, willing, and able to support all of NASA's missions and there is more than enough technical work to go around. NASA headquarters needs to reduce the load of

self-generated program-reporting busy work that it dumps on its front-line managers, which then reduces real productivity and drives the "need" for excess management.

Decentralizing the Constellation program:

Administrator Griffin deserves considerable praise for realizing that all of NASA Centers should share in the work opportunities (and responsibilities) provided by the Constellation program, according to their capabilities and facilities. This idea, however, has been difficult to implement fully and is not a long-term solution.

- Constellation program management is too closely allied with Johnson Space Center management and has therefore been very reluctant to comply fully with the decentralization process. As stated in the minutes of the NASA Strategic Management Council's February 21st 2007 meeting:

  "… *flight centers seem reluctant to place development work at research centers …*"

  Indeed, when Constellation work-packages have been transferred to other centers, JSC has only minimally complied by transferring the CS Full Time Equivalent (FTE) portion of the funds, while retaining the procurement dollars and contractor work-year equivalent (WYE) funds, thereby making it impossible for other centers to match JSC's apparent productivity. JSC continues to prefer hiring within their local JSC contractor teams and to resist transferring the full budget associated with Constellation work-packages to CS-contractor-academic teams at other centers.

- IFPTE concurs with the NRC report finding that rigorous requirement management is a critical factor in mission success (Box 4.1). It would therefore appear troubling that Constellation and JSC management have chosen to use employees of the Orion prime contractor to help define the development, validation, and verification of Orion's requirements; this creates an obvious conflict of interest as these requirements impact the profitability of the prime contract. To protect the taxpayer, civil-service ethics rules would disqualify any civil-servant employee from working on a NASA project in which they had a direct financial interest. Furthermore, this questionable outsourcing is particularly harmful when the expertise contracted out already exists in-house at another NASA center.

- The Constellation work is largely short-term technical oversight tasks of hardware-software development programs, with the lion's share of the real work ultimately performed by the Orion prime and sub-contractors. These work assignments are generally not full-time and do not generally cover NASA's world-class scientists and technology developers, whose innovative research is critical for the long-term health of the Agency and the ultimate success of the VSE. The only sustainable long-term solution is to revitalize NASA's Aeronautics, Exploration Research and Technology, and Science programs.

The Administration's proposed new flexibilities:

IFPTE supports NASA's efforts to obtain enhanced voluntary buy-out authority. However, we strongly opposed the effort to obtain legislation to enhance their authority

to convert permanent positions to term positions as this would only exacerbate the current abuse of term hiring.

Recommendations:

In order for NASA to move forward towards reinvigorating its workforce to better support all of its missions, IFPTE offers the following recommendations:

1. **Congress should fund NASA as close to the authorized level as possible and prohibit executive transfer authority.**

    - In its endorsement of the VSE, Congress authorized $18.7 billion for FY08, yet the President has proposed only $17.3 billion. This $1.4 billion shortfall is at the core of all of NASA's problems.

    - None of the National Research Council recommendations on NASA workforce revitalization can come to fruition without adequate Appropriation.

    - Congress' direction will not have the intended impact unless all major Appropriations accounts are unambiguously specified, with executive transfer authority limited to moving funds within these major accounts (e.g., Education funds should be specifically appropriated with transfer to other activities prohibited).

    - IFPTE proposes an additional $300 million for Science above that in the President's budget (including increased funding for the Research & Analysis activities called for by the NRC to support both in-house and academic research), an additional $120 million for Exploration Advanced Capabilities (to support the longer-term R&D needed to maintain healthy and strong technology development both in-house and externally), an additional $30 million for Education (to encourage our youth to devote themselves to a technical education leading to a career in aerospace), and an additional $200 million for Aeronautics (to support NASA's traditional forte in Aeronautics R&D as well as its traditional relationship with the aviation industry and its new commitments to the JPDO). In addition to fully supporting NASA's key missions, these specific Appropriations proposals also form the basis of an implementation plan for workforce renewal, consistent with the NRC report.

2. **Congress should preserve and protect the technical excellence and independence of NASA's civil-service workforce.**

    - All talk of downsizing should cease immediately and be replaced by talk of sustained recruitment of NASA's new generation of employees.

    - Congress should prohibit the disruptive and misguided policy of full-cost recovery of civil-service salaries, thereby re-empowering rank-and-file employees and their line management with the flexibility to assign and perform work as needed within a balanced partnership with program management.

    - Congress should require NASA to fund CS salaries and travel directly to the centers, independent of programs, to allow for more balanced and effective matrix

management. This would put an end to the scapegoating of the CS workforce for NASA's overall budgetary shortfall.

- Congress should ask the Government Accountability Office to audit NASA's use of term positions.

- Although Congress has temporarily prohibited layoffs, as seen in the recent NAPA report, some within NASA management continue to promulgate anti-civil service rhetoric. Without adequate factual justification, NAPA has endorsed a plan to consider downsizing NASA's CS workforce (i.e. they want to put RIFs back on the table with weaker safeguards, with management's latest target being 2,000 Shuttle employees primarily at JSC and KSC as we near 2010). Clearly, most of these employees can be retrained to work on Constellation or they will simply retire, yet NASA is asking for legislation to go after them.

3. NASA management should provide visible and sustained stability for its current workforce to support the inspiration then recruitment of its future workforce.

- The best and brightest young engineering and science graduates need once again to see aerospace as a stable career option in general and NASA as a great career move in particular, comparable to accepting a job at a premier academic or private-sector research institution (e.g., MIT or Google or Lockheed Martin). They need to feel confident of stable job opportunities at NASA early in their education to inspire them to embark on the demanding educational paths of science, engineering, and math.

- NASA should re-embrace its Aeronautics, Science, and Technology missions as these activities are a major component of the attraction to NASA for the best and brightest young minds.

4. IFPTE supports the NRC recommendations, especially #2, #4, and #6.

- NASA must begin an aggressive campaign to recruit young employees while the current senior staff is still on board to transfer its knowledge.

- NASA must aggressively establish hands-on training programs and research opportunities for both current employees and students (aka future employees) to help forge a strong future workforce.

- NASA must maintain a portfolio of smaller flight programs to both provide valuable, yet less expensive, scientific return (especially given that the Shuttle is no longer available to support Life or Microgravity Science) and to train young project managers/scientists within more modest projects.

5. IFPTE strongly opposes three NAPA recommendations.

- The NAPA report is deeply flawed as it accepts, unchallenged, erroneous premises associated with the Administration's policies. In particular, the argument that

NASA's mission is changing dramatically thereby requiring a smaller CS workforce is fallacious. NASA's mission has been and will continue to be to perform aerospace-related scientific research & engineering development. The current transient emphasis on spacecraft design and development will pass and should not be the pretext for a massive downsizing of NASA's civil service workforce. The crisis is artificial; without adequate funds for Constellation, the Administrator has resorted to cannibalizing the Science and Aeronautics budgets and their associated employees. Rather than advocating for a fictitious realignment, the NAPA report should have performed a more neutral and vigorous examination of the budgetary and programmatic premises provided to them by the Administration.

- The recommendation that NASA should contemplate a BRAC-like process to consider the closure of one or more of its research centers completely misses the mark. BRAC was a unique response to America winning the cold war. The US therefore needed to dramatically transition its military posture to be more appropriate for the completely different post-cold-war world. NASA, on the other hand, is preparing to re-invigorate its human spaceflight mission in response to the VSE. It is moving back to the future to re-invent Apollo, while also maintaining its traditional portfolio of Aeronautics and Science. The VSE does not represent a dramatic change in NASA's mission but rather only a transient re-emphasis on spacecraft design and development. Furthermore, NASA's research centers function as a lifeline to academia and are absolutely essential if NASA is going to solve the very real technology development obstacles on the critical path to lunar outpost and Mars. NASA's highly-respected research centers need to be rescued from the Administration's current misguided policies, not sacrificed to meet short-term budgetary shortfalls.

- The recommendation that NASA management be allowed to streamline its RIF procedures fails completely to acknowledge the fundamental principles behind the creation of the civil service. Hiring and firing employees nearly at will, as is sometimes done in the private sector, may provide management with the flexibility it craves, but it does not work well when management is playing with the taxpayers' money. The usual market-force feedback is not present and thus very stringent regulations are absolutely necessary to prevent patronage, cronyism, and other forms of corruption. Furthermore, given that Chapter IV of the NAPA report laments that NASA management currently is not properly following existing federal law related to contractor employees, it would seem imprudent to reward NASA management with greater authority to fire CS employees. Again, NASA's primary workforce challenge, as repeatedly highlighted in the NRC report, is to recruit and build its future workforce. The obsession with layoffs is misplaced, is wasting taxpayer dollars, and harming morale and productivity.

- The recommendation that NASA management be allowed to declare an emergency and terminate its older annuity-eligible employees is not only wrong-headed, it is overtly discriminatory. Retirement eligibility (which correlates strongly with age) should never be used as a criterion for termination or any other adverse employment action. When all other criteria are the same, using retirement eligibility to decide who stays and who is fired is unconscionable. IFPTE is simply shocked that the NAPA would openly advocate for age discrimination. NASA employees generally become annuity eligible at 55 years young (50 for early out); IFPTE believes that

rather than considering employees over 55 as liabilities, NASA management should acknowledge that the maturity, wisdom, and hands-on experience that our older scientists and engineers provide are critical for mission success.

6. IFPTE supports enhancing NASA's voluntary buyout authority.

- Congress should consider legislation to allow enhanced buy-out authority for NASA. We therefore support the temporary continuation of medical coverage in Section 102 of the Administration's proposed flexibility legislation.

- Many non-critical employees would like to retire immediately, but need to stay on a few additional years for financial reasons. A more reasonable compensation package would greatly help NASA persuade these employees to retire without impacting morale and would ultimately save the tax payer a lot of money.

- The NAPA recommendation that NASA management be allowed to increase its voluntary buy-out cap from $25,000 to $35,000 is simply inadequate to effectively enhance this incentive. The high-tech industry standard is generally one year's pay, which is much more than NASA's current $25,000 or the proposed $35,000.

- IFPTE proposes a more realistic incentive, in line with those available to many untenured private-sector employees, with the buy-out calculation equal to the individual's severance pay (regardless of annuity eligibility) capped at one-year's salary.

7. IFPTE strongly opposes any new authority to facilitate the conversion of permanent positions to term positions.

- NASA management is already abusing its current expanded term authority and should not be given additional authority to undermine civil-service independence. We therefore oppose Section 101 of the Administration's proposed flexibility legislation.

In conclusion, IFPTE is encouraged by the recent effort to distribute Constellation work more fairly and intelligently across the centers, and is very grateful for the bi-partisan Congressional rescue that protected NASA's workforce from the Administration's reckless RIF plan. We must now turn from the era of workforce damage control to the more positive task of re-building NASA's future multi-sector workforce. We hope that the Subcommittee will seriously consider our recommendations above, as well as those of the NRC panel.

Once again, IFPTE thanks Chairman Udall and Ranking Member Feeney for the opportunity to bring these important issues to the attention of the Subcommittee.